[For general information on the distribution of soil types in India see 6: Spate AW1 India, category 116, pp. 80-92.]

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

CHAPTER ONE

The Setting

1. THE SETTING

105 131 SHAMIRPET is a village situated at a distance of about twenty-five miles from the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secundrabad in the Deccan plateau of India. Culturally it lies in the region known as Telangana, which is itself a part of the wider culture-area of Andhra-desa. Telangana is a country of fertile fields and barren rocks; a land of temples, tanks and lakes. It is estimated that there are over twenty thousand lakes and tanks in this region, which covers an area of more than 42,000 square miles. Shamirpet is located by the side of one of these tanks and lies on the road that links the capital city of Hyderabad with Karimnagar, the headquarters of the northern district of that name.

133 134 137 132 The picturesque landscape of the village is truly characteristic of the Deccan plateau. The soil is in part black and in part red, and is suitable for the cultivation of rice, millet, castor and other oil-seeds, pulses and tobacco. An endless series of barren rocks formed of gneisses and granites dominates the land. Tall palmyra trees stand magnificently and imperiously against the often-clear sky, evergreen shrubs circle the rock formations and tamarind trees grow here and there near human habitation. In the countryside surrounding Shamirpet the average annual rainfall is about twenty-five inches. From Indian standards, the climate is moderate and knows no extremes either in winter or in summer. The days during the summer season are rather hot, the temperature often touching 112° F., but the evenings and nights are always cool and pleasant. In some winter nights the temperature drops to 137 45° F. There is little forest in the country immediately surrounding

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They mostly hunt small game, and are adept in the use of traps, snares and dogs. At the time of these investigations there were six guns in the village; and occasionally their owners went out shooting. Similarly, fishing is done by very few people, mostly by some young Muslim men. They do not use fishing nets and traps, and practically the only method employed by them for catching the fish is that of using the rod, hook and bait. The large tank in the vicinity of the village could afford a good supply of fish, but the absence of the fishing caste in the village population leaves this possibility almost unexplored. Fishermen from the neighbouring villages, however, periodically come to the tank.

The surroundings of Shamirpet offer very few opportunities for the collection of wild food. Around the village there are not many fruit-bearing trees. Mango and *jamun* (rose apple, *Eugenia jambolana*) fruits are mostly eaten while they are still unripe by the village boys. Parties of children and young people periodically go to pick wild berries when they are in season. These are mostly eaten on the spot. When wild figs are ripe children collect and eat them. Another item of food eagerly sought by everyone is the *chikur*—tender tamarind leaves, These leaves are curried, as well as pickled and preserved. Honey is collected by some men of lower castes and inferior social status, whenever they can spot a comb. Medicinal herbs, roots, tubers and barks are collected according to need.

Utilization of forest resources is not open to everyone now. From the surrounding scrub jungle villagers can collect only a limited quantity of fuel, as this—as well as getting timber—is regulated by the Forest Department of the government, and permits can be obtained only by making scheduled payments.

Different kinds of coloured earth used in washing walls and decorating the interiors of homes, as well as the ordinary requirements for the construction of houses, can be freely collected by the people. The Vaddars can break and shape stones without having to pay for them.

6. NON-AGRICULTURAL OCCUPATIONS

In an effort to explain the broad outlines of the economic organization of the community, the traditional occupations and functions of the different castes have already been described. With reference to the inter-relations between the agriculturists